

This Rule change petition is STRONGLY SUPPORTED by the Arizona Association of Superior Court Administrators (AASCA).

As the association that is comprised of the professional managers responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of justice in the primary courts of record in Arizona, we fully support this petition. We recognize the concerns raised by court reporters about the petition, but believe they do not consider the realities faced by judges and administrators in all states, including Arizona, to ensure that the timely administration of justice can occur. The reality of the court reporting industry is that as the average age of court reporters nationally rise, the supply of new court reporters continues to fall. A significant percentage of court reporting education programs have closed all over the country, and those that remain open face a dropout rate between 80 and 85%, according to the Wall Street Journal. All Superior Court locations throughout the state have faced this reality for years with chronic shortages of qualified and available reporters and the increasing dependence on electronic recording systems. Fortunately, technology improvements have been substantial since the last time Arizona's Judicial Branch explored this issue in 2005. The implementation of digital recording systems in many courthouses around the state have helped preserve the integrity of the verbatim record while coping with the reporter shortage. Labor statistics show a continuing drop in the actual number of court reporter jobs as more courts adapt to these realities. For the last five years, almost a third of the states have switched exclusively to electronic recording, but we are thankful that we are not in that situation. We strongly believe that to ensure courts can provide timely transcripts and accurately record all proceedings required under Arizona statutes and rules, court leadership must be given the administrative flexibility to utilize all options available to capture the verbatim record. Our association has watched the national and local trends for years and have expressed concerns in other forums about the declining availability of court reporters and the increased promise of the technological advancements in the electronic recording industry. So when Chief Justice Bales convened the Arizona Supreme Court Task Force to Supplement Keeping of the Record by Electronic Means in May of 2019, the association was in complete support of the undertaking. Nothing has changed in this past year that would cause our group to believe that giving judges and administrators flexibility to determine how to capture the verbatim record is anything but in the best interest of justice and those who seek it.

Respectfully submitted by:
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